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Message Text

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PEPR, PBOR, PINT, LE

SUBJECT: LEBANON: NEXT STEPS
REF: BEIRUT 3692
1. WE TO, HAVE BEEN GIVING SOME THOUGHT TO A "NEW
ARRANGEMENT" WHICH MIGHT EASE SOME OF THE PROBLEMS LEBANON
IS NOW FACING. OUR VIEW HAS BEEN THAT, UP TO NOW, THE
SYRIAN ROLE IN MAINTAINING SECURITY IN LEBANON HAS BEEN
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INDISPENSABLE, EVEN WHILE ACKNOWLEDGING THE FORCE THE
SYRIANS HAVE EXERCISED IN PAST INCIDENTS THIS YEAR HAS
BEEN EXCESSIVE ON OCCASION. THE SYRIANS, OF COURSE, HAVE
HAD TO DEAL WITH MANY PROVOCATIONS.

2. IN ADDITION, HOWEVER, WE HAVE SEEN A SYRIAN MILITARY
PRESENCE IN LEBANON AS HIGHLY IMPORTANT, IF NOT INDISPENS-

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ABLE, IN EXERTING AT LEAST SOME CONTROL OVER THE PALESTINIANS. THE EXERTION OF SYRIAN INFLUENCE AND CONTROL OVER THE PALESTINIANS HAS IMPLICATIONS NOT ONLY FOR GENERAL SECURITY CONDITIONS IN THE COUNTRY BUT ALSO FOR UNIFIL AND THE SOUTHERN LEBANESE PROBLEM GENERALLY.

3. BASED ON EARLIER EXAMINATIONS OF THE SECURITY PROBLEM IN LEBANON, WE DOUBT STRONGLY THAT EGYPT COULD BE PERSUADED TO PUT ANY OF ITS FORCES INTO LEBANON. SIMILARLY, AN EXPANDED UNIFIL TO POLICE THE ENTIRE COUNTRY IS PROBABLY AN UNREALISTIC OBJECTIVE. AS IT IS, WE MAY FACE A SERIOUS PROBLEM IF THE FRENCH DECIDE TO WITHDRAW THEIR FORCES FROM UNIFIL WHEN RENEWAL TIME COMES. CONSEQUENTLY, WE WOULD LIKE YOU TO CONSIDER POSSIBLE "ARRANGEMENT" UNDER WHICH SYRIAN FORCES WOULD BE WITHDRAWN FROM THE CHOICE FLASHPOINTS IN BEIRUT AREA AND CHRISTIAN MOUNT LEBANON GENERALLY. SYRIAN FORCES WOULD, HOWEVER, BE POSITIONED IN KEY SPOTS WHERE INTER-COMMUNAL TENSIONS HISTORICALLY HAVE ERUPTED FROM TIME TO TIME (E.G., IN THE CHOUF) OR AROUND PALESTINIAN CONCENTRATIONS, INCLUDING IN BEIRUT.

4. UNDER THIS POSSIBLE ARRANGEMENT, THE SYRIAN FORCES MIGHT REMAIN ALOOF FROM INTER-MARONITE FIGHTING, HOWEVER BLOODY. WE ALSO RECOGNIZE IT WOULD TEND TO REINFORCE DE FACTO PARTITION IF THE PHALANGE, IN PARTICULAR, ENFORCED POLICE SECURITY OVER MUCH OF THE CHRISTIAN AREA.
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IT WOULD ALSO EFFECTIVELY DENY TO SARKIS SOME OF THE MILITARY AUTHORITY HE CAN NOW EXERCISE BY CALLING IN SYRIAN TROOPS.

5. WE WOULD APPRECIATE COMMENTS FROM DAMASCUS AS WELL AS BEIRUT AS TO THE FEASIBILITY OF A PRACTICAL ARRANGEMENT ALONG THE FOREGOING LINES. VANCE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: SECURITY, TROOP DEPLOYMENT, CAT-B, COMBAT OPERATIONS, MILITARY PLANS, INTERNATIONAL PEACEKEEPING FORCES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 04 jul 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978STATE168926
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: MDRAPER:BDF
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: P840172-2704
Format: TEL
From: STATE NEA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780797/aaaadeci.tel
Line Count: 101
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 32bb7c7b-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN NODS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS, EXDIS
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS, EXDIS
Reference: 78 BEIRUT 3692
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 28 jun 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2121726
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: LEBANON: NEXT STEPS
TAGS: PEPR, PBOR, PINT, MOPS, LE, SY, EG, UNIFIL
To: AMMAN CAIRO MULTIPLE
Type: TE
vdkvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/32bb7c7b-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
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